COLLECTOR'S CORNER #84 MAY 21, 1976
JOHN LENNON

"THE BELLS OF TARENTUM"
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: AND NOW, COLLECTOR'S CORNER -- THE VOICE OF AMERICA SERIES OF PROGRAMS FOR LISTENERS WHO COLLECT THINGS, WHETHER THEY BE STAMPS, OR COINS, SNUFF BOTTLES OR OLD AUTOS, OR MERELY BALLS OF STRING. HERE IS -------- WITH A REPORT ON WHAT MIGHT BE THE LARGEST PRIVATELY-OWNED COLLECTION OF BELLS IN THE WORLD.

NARR: IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA, JUST AN HOUR'S TRAVELING TIME FROM THE MAJOR INDUSTRIAL CITY OF PITTSBURGH, THERE IS A RED BRICK HOUSE TRIMMED WITH REDWOOD AND COVERED WITH IVY, WELL OFF THE MAIN ROAD AND SET BACK IN THE WOODS. IT LOOKS MUCH LIKE THE HOMES OF MANY RESIDENTS OF THAT PART OF THE COUNTRY -- EXCEPT FOR THE FACT THAT IN THE YARD AROUND THE HOUSE, IN ADDITION TO TREES AND SHRUBS, A VISITOR CAN SEE BELLS... DOZENS AND DOZENS OF BELLS OF ALL SIZES, HANGING FROM WOODEN FRAMES AND METAL STANDS. AND FOR THE CURIOUS TRAVELER WHO WANTS TO KNOW MORE, THAT IS JUST THE BEGINNING. FOR INSIDE THE HOUSE -- IN THE BASEMENT, ALONG THE STEPS, UPSTAIRS AND DOWN -- ARE MORE BELLS -- HUNDREDS... THOUSANDS OF BELLS, OF ALL SHAPES, SIZES AND SOUNDS.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- BELLS -- IN FULL FOR :20, THEN FADE UNDER NARRATOR AND OUT

NARR: THE BELLS THAT YOU HEAR -- AND MANY THOUSANDS MORE -- ARE THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF ONE MAN, J. OLIVER ELLIOTT, WHO LIVES WITH HIS WIFE IN THE FEW REMAINING SPACES OF A HOUSE THEY HAVE TURNED INTO A MUSEUM -- APPROPRIATELY CALLED "BELL HAVEN." MISTER ELLIOTT'S COLLECTION IS CONSIDERED UNIQUE, AND IS UNDOUBTEDLY WORTH A FORTUNE. BUT FOR HIM, IT IS SIMPLY A LOT OF FUN -- AND SOMETHING HE GOT INTO ALMOST BY ACCIDENT, WHEN HE RETIRED SOME TWENTY YEARS AGO.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- ELLIOTT

"WHY DO I COLLECT BELLS? I DON'T KNOW. I GOT STARTED ABOUT TWENTY YEARS AGO WHEN I WAS IN THE NURSERY (PLANT) BUSINESS, AND ONE WINTER WHEN WE COULDN'T DO MUCH WORK, I TOOK MY SON WHO WORKED FOR ME AT THE TIME TO A NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE -- HE WAS HAVING A SALE -- TO BUY A BIG FARM BELL, LIKE THE KIND THEY USE TO CALL PEOPLE TO DINNER. WE BOUGHT THE BELL FOR A FEW DOLLARS AND PUT IT ON A POLE IN THE BACK YARD. THE NEXT SPRING WE WERE TRAVELING THROUGH NEW YORK STATE, AND STOPPED AT AN ANTIQUE STORE WHERE I SAW A STRING OF SLEIGHBELLS -- AND BOUGHT THOSE FOR FIVE DOLLARS. THEN I CAME HOME AND DISCOVERED THAT MY NEIGHBOR WAS THE PRESIDENT OF A BELL COLLECTOR'S ORGANIZATION.... SO I JOINED THE CLUB, AND I'VE BEEN COLLECTING BELLS EVER SINCE."

NARR: WHAT STARTED OUT AS A HOBBY HAS BECOME A LABOR OF LOVE FOR MISTER ELLIOTT, WHO TAKES PRIDE IN SHOWING VISITORS THE BELLS IN HIS COLLECTION, EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND AND ORIGIN OF THE MANY DIFFERENT VARIETIES THAT FILL EVERY CORNER IN HIS HOME. HE AND HIS WIFE HAVE EVEN OPENED THEIR HOUSE TO TOURISTS FROM OUTSIDE PENNSYLVANIA AND FROM AROUND THE WORLD. BUT MISTER ELLIOTT EMPHASIZES THAT IN SPITE OF ALL THE PUBLICITY -- AND THE SPREADING REPUTATION OF "BELL HAVEN" AS AN INTERNATIONAL TOURIST

NARR: (CONT'D) ATTRACTION -- HE VIEWS HIS COLLECTION TODAY JUST AS HE ALWAYS HAS: AS A HOBBY THAT IS A LOT OF FUN, WHICH HE IS GLAD TO SHARE WITH ANYBODY:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- ELLIOTT

"I DON'T CHARGE ADMISSION AT ALL. WE WELCOME ANYONE WHO IS INTERESTED, AND WE'LL SPEND QUITE A BIT OF TIME WITH THEM. I'VE FOUND OUT THAT I'M NOT INTERESTED IN MONEY -- I THINK NINETY PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE REST OF THE WORLD WORSHIP THE DOLLAR, AND IT RUINS THEIR LIVES. MY BUSINESS IS MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY, AND IT MAKES BIG DIVIDENDS -- WE GO TO BED AT NIGHT AND SLEEP LIKE LITTLE KITTENS."

NARR: AT EIGHTY-SIX YEARS OF AGE, MISTER ELLIOTT DOES NOT SEEM IMPRESSED WITH THE FACT THAT HE MIGHT BE THE WORLD'S FOREMOST COLLECTOR OF BELLS. HE IS OBVIOUSLY IMPRESSED WITH THE SIZE OF HIS COLLECTION, HOWEVER -- AND SEEMS ALMOST SURPRISED THAT IT COULD HAVE GOTTEN SO LARGE. AND IT IS CLEAR THAT THE TOURISTS WHO COME TO HIS HOME-GROWN MUSEUM FROM AROUND THE WORLD EVERY YEAR ARE ALSO IMPRESSED.

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- ELLIOTT

"WE HAVE A REGISTER WHICH THEY SIGN, AND IN WHICH THEY MAKE REMARKS, AND OVER A PERIOD OF FIFTEEN YEARS -- PEOPLE HAVE MADE SUCH REMARKS AS 'THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD,' AND 'NEVER SAW ANYTHING EQUAL TO IT ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD."

NARR: FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD COME THE BELLS... FROM AFRICA, ASIA, EUROPE AND THE SOVIET UNION... FROM THIRTEENTH CENTURY CHINA, TO TWENTIETH CENTURY NORTH AMERICA... IN A COLLECTION THAT SPANS OCEANS AND CENTURIES, COMING TO REST AT BELL HAVEN PENNSYLVANIA.

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- ELLIOTT NAMES AND RINGS VARIOUS BELLS...

"CHINESE GONGS... BELLS FROM MEXICO... CAMEL BELLS... SACRISTY BELLS... THIS IS A SHAFT BELL, FASTENED ON THE SIDES OF HORSES PULLING SLEIGHS... COWBELLS... AND THIS IS THE BELL THAT I USED ON THE MILK WAGON WHEN I WAS TWELVE YEARS OF AGE."

NARR: J. OLIVER ELLIOTT, PROPRIETOR AT BELL HAVEN MUSEUM... THE OWNER OF A UNIQUE COLLECTION... AND A MAN WHO HAS FOUND HAPPINESS AND SHARED IT WITH OTHERS BY BRINGING BELLS -- AND PEOPLE -- INTO HIS HOME.

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN COLLECTOR'S CORNER, NOTES ON THE WORLD OF COLLECTORS WHO BUY AND SELL, AND ABOVE ALL, CHERISH THINGS -- FROM STAMPS, TO FURNITURE, TO BELLS. PRODUCTION ASSISTANCE FOR THIS PROGRAM SUPPLIED BY MEREDITH YOUNG IN PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT WEEK FOR ANOTHER LOOK INTO THE COLLECTOR'S CORNER. THIS IS ----------.

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WJL/CAK